Message Text

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, ECON, CO

SUBJECT: MONTHLY TRENDS REPORT COLOMBIA DEC 1974

1. SUMMARY. DECEMBER WAS AN UPSWING MONTH FOR THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION, ALTHOUGH IN LARGE PART FOR FORTUITOUS REASONS. THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND THEIR POLITICAL RAMIFICATIONS WHICH HAVE BESET COLOMBIA AND THE ADMINISTRATION IN RECENT MONTHS HAD NOT LESSENED. RATHER, THE PASSAGE OF THE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR EUPHORIA IS LIKELY TO SEE A RESURGENCE OF DISSATISFACTION IN SOME POCKETS OF THE NATION AND THE ECONOMY WITH THE LIKELOHOOD OF FURTHER SOCIAL UNREST. EVEN PRO-LOPEZ SOURCES BELIEVED THAT THE NEXT THREE TO SIX MONTHS WOULD BE A DIFFICULT PERIOD FOR THE GOVERNMENT. MEANWHILE, SNIPING AND MANEUVERING FOR POSITION WITHIN THE LIBERAL PARTY ARE LIKELY TO INCREASE UNLESS A CONVENTION SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY IS ABLE TO CONSOLIDATE THE PARTY. CONFIDENTIAL

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THE GOC TOOK A FIRST CAUTIOUS STEP TOWARD RAPPROCHEMENT TO CUBA.

END SUMMARY.

2. DOMESTIC POLITICAL. EARLY IN THE MONTH THE GOVERNMENT WAS ABLE TO TAKE COMFORT FROM THE FACT THAT THE COST-OF LIVING INDIX FOR NOVEMBER HAD RISENBY ONLY 1.1 PERCENT OVER THE PREVIOUS MONTH, A SIGNIFICANT DROP FROM THE ALARMING 4.1 PERCENT INCREASE REGISTERED IN OCTOBER. PRESIDENT LOPEZ PUBLICALY CONCLUDED THAT GOVERNMENT ANTI-INFLATION MEASURES WERE BEGINNING TO TAKE EFFECT. IT SEEMED MORE LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT NOVEMBER WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY FURTHER INFLATIONARY PRESSURES, BUT PERHAPS NOT AS HIGH AS THE 25 PERCENT RATE OF 1974.

THE FULL EFFECTS OF THE RECENT NATIONWIDE MINIMUM WAGE INCREASES HAD NOT YET BEEN FELT. AN INCREASE IN THE COST OF COOKING GAS IN BOGOTA, WHICH THE GOVERNMENT REPORTEDLY WILL AUTHORIZE IN MID-JANUARY WOULD PRODUCE FURTHER DISSATISFACTION. IN ADDITION TO THE STRESSES OF FURTHER COST-OF-LIVING INCREASES THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF GROWING UNEMPLOYMENT DURING THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

3. BY MID/DECEMBER A PATTERN COULD BE DISCERNED WHICH WAS COMPOSED OF POPULAR EXASPERATION OVER HIGH PRICES, POOR PUBLIC SERVICES, AND PERHPAS, WORKING CLASS DISAPPOINTMENT OVER THE LACT OF BENEFITS TO THEM FROM THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION TOGETHER WITH INCREASING MILITANCY OF THE COMMUNIST-LED CSTC, AND OTHER LEFTIST OR OPPOITION GROUPS SUCH AS MOIR AND ANAPO. THIS PROCESS REACHED CONFRONTATION STAGE IN THE NATIONWIDE BANCO POPULAR STRIKE WHICH, AFTER A WEEKS DELAY WAS DECLARED ILLEGAL BY THE GOVERNMENT. AN OVER-REACTION BY MANAGEMENT, WHICH RESULTED IN THE FORCIBLE REMOVAL OF STRIKERS FROM BANK PREMISES AND A LARGE NUMBER OF ARRESTS AND DISMISSALS, CALLED FORTH THE PROSPECT OF A BROADER NATIONWIDE BANK STRIKE IN SYMPATHY. BEFORE THIS TREAT THE GOVERNMENT RETREATED. THE ACTING MINISTER OF LABOR REACHED AN AGREEMENT WITH THE STRIKERS OVER THE HEADS OF THE BANKS MANAGEMENT WHICH REVOKED ALL DISCIPLINARY MEASURES AND WHICH SEEMED TACITLY TO GUARANTEE THAT THE STRIKERS SALARY DEMANDS WOULD SUBSTANTIALLY BE MET. (BOGOTA 11031) 4. THIS SOLUTION ENSURED A TRANQUIL HOLIDAY SEASON FOR CONFIDENTIAL.

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COLOMBIA BUT WAS A BITING COMMENTARY ON PRESIDENT LOPEZ STATEMENTS IN HIS ADDRESS TO THE CLOSING SESSION OF CONGRESS, THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ALLOW ITSELF T BE SWAYED BY EXTRALEGAL PRESSURES. (BOGOTA 11206)

5. AS THE END OF THE 1974 LEGISLATIVE SESSION DREW TO A CLOSE CONGRESS, FACED WITH THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EXTRA-ORDINARY SESSION, SHOWED AN ALACRITY BORDERING ON DOCILITY IN PASSING VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE BILLS WHICH THE ADMINISTRATION HAD SUBMITTED. WITH VIRTUALLY NO FLOOR DEBATE. CONGRESS SUBMISSIVINESS TO THE EXECUTIVE WAS EMPHASIZED BY THE NUMBER OF MEASURES WHICH SIMPLY EMPOWERED THE PRESIDENT TO ISSUE EXECUTIVE DECREES. THE CONGRESS DID NOT AVAIL ITSELF OF ITS CONSTITUATIONAL PREROGATIVE TO DEBATE, AMEND OR RESCIND LOPEZ'S ECONOMIC EMERGENCY MEASURES, THUS GIVING THEM ITS TACIT APPROVAL. ONE OF CONGRESSS MOST PUBLICIZED ACTIONS WAS THE INCREASE BY 50 PERCENT OF CONGRESSIONAL SALARIES DESPITE A GENERAL GOVERNMENT POLICY OF AUSTERITY AND IN THE FACE OF STRONGLY CRITICAL PRESS AND PUBLIC REACTION. THE MEASURE COST THE CONGRESS CONSIDERABLE PRESTIGE AND PROVOKED RESENTMENT. PRESIDENT LOPEZ DISAPPOINTED MANY COLOMBIAN BY REFUSING TO VETO THE BILL. ALTHOUGH HE INDICATED THAT HE BELIEVED THE INCREASE WAS INAPPROPRIATE. IN A TARTLY WORDED REPLY TO A LIBERAL POLITICIAN WHO CALLED UPON HIM TO REJECT THE MEASURE, LOPEZ REMARKED THAT "THE THEATER IS NOT MY FORTE" AND POINTED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH THE INCREASE WAS INOPPORTUNE THE CONGRESS HAD THE CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO LEGISLATE ITS OWN SALARIES. THE PRESIENT EVEN POINTED OUT TO THE CONGRESS TECHNICAL FLAWS IN THE BILL WHICH WOULD HAVE LED TO ITS BEING INVALIDATED IT TESTED IN THE COURTS. CONGRESS DILIGENTLY CORRECTED THESE ERRORS. 6. POLITICAL SNIPING AND MANEUVERING INCREASED WITHIN THE DOMINANT LIBERAL PARTY. THE CUAWE WAS NOT GOVERNMENT POLICY OR IDEOLOGY, EXCEPT AS PRETEXTS TO JUSTIFY THE UNDERLYING OUESTION: WHO WILL BE THE PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN 1978 THIS ISSUE IS IN PART RESPONSIBLE FOR THE AIMLESSNESS AND LACK OF FOCUS ON POLICY WHICH HAVE CHARACTERIZED THE LIBERAL PARTY AND THE CONGRESS DURING RECENT MONTHS. AS WELL AS FOR THE EMERGENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATIONS MOST VOCAL CRITIC EX-PRESIDENT CARLOS LLERAS. WHO REGULARLY SUBJECTS THE CONFIDENTIAL

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HIS WEEKLY NUEVA FRONTERA.
7 THE LIBERAL PARTY IS ROUGHLY DIVIDED AT THE MOMENT
INTO THREE FACTIONS: LOPISTAS, TURBAYISTAS, AND LLERISTAS,
ALTHOUGH A GREAT MANY LIBERALS HAVE AVOIDED IDENTIFICATION
WITH ANY OF THE CAMPS. THE LOPISTAS, THE
LARGEST GROUP, HAVE BEEN LEADERLESS AS A RESULT OF LOPEZS
REFUSAL TO ACT A S A PARTY LEADER, AND MANY OF THEM ARE UN
COMFORTABLE WITH, OR HOSTILE TO, THE IDEA OF TURBAY AS PARTY
LEADER AND PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. ON THE OTHER HAND,
MOST TURBAYISTAS PASS AS LOPISTAS. TURBAY, A MAN INVERIABLY
DESCRIBED AS AN EFFECTIVE POLITICAL OPERATOR BUT WITH NO
POLITICAL IDEAS OF HIS OWN, HA ASSOCIATED HIMSELF WITH
LOPEZ PROGRAMS AND POLITICES. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT LOPEZ,
WHO CANNOT SUCCEED HIMSELF IN THE PRESIDENCY, IS ONLY THE

ADMINISTRATION TO SARCASTIC ANALYSIS IN THE COLUMNS OF

PROXIMATE TARGET OF LLERAS BARBS AND THAT THE ULTIMATE TARGET IS TURBAY. THE APPOINTMENT OF TURBAY TO AN AMBASSADOR SHIP, PROBABLY TO WASHINGTON, HAS BEEN RUMORED FOR MONTHS AND THIS SPECULATION HAS BECOME MORE INTENSE RECENTLY.

ALTHOUGH TURBAYS'S REMOVAL FROM THE SECEN MIGHT MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR HIM TO ADVANCE HIS AMBITION, IT WOULD ALSO DISASSOCIATE HIM FROM THE CONTROVERSY AND POSSIBLE FAILURE OF THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION.

8. THERE IS BROAD AWARENESS IN THE LIBERAL PARTY OF THE NEED FOR UNIFIED DIRECTION AND LEADERSHIP WHICH WILL TRANSCEND PERSONAL RIVALRIES AND MOBILIZE THE PARTY BEHIND THE PRESIDENT'S PROGRAMS. TO ACCOMPLISH THIS A PARTY CONVENTION HAS BEEN CALLED FOR FEB 1, WHICH WILL PROBABLY NAME A NEW LIBERAL NATIONAL DIRECTORATE (DLN) TO REPLACE THEONE WHICH HAS BEEN PARALYZED SINCE AUGUST BY PERSONAL DIFFERENCES AMONG ITS MEMBERS, AND WHICH WILL ESTABLISH POLITICAL OBJECTIVES IN SUPPORT OF LOPEZ (BOGOTA 11206). THE CONVENTION THE PURPOSE OF WHICH IS TO STRENGTHEN PARTY UNITY. HAS ITSELF BECOME A FOCUS OF DISCORD.PRESSURE HAS BEEN GROWING TO POSTPONE THE CONVENTION TO APRIL, OR VEN TO JULY WHEN CONGRESS BEGINS ITS 1975 SESSION, DUE TO CONCERN THAT A HASTILY PREPARED CONVENTION WOULD ONLY PRODUCE SUPERFICIAL RESULTS. SOME LIBERALS ALSO FEAR THAT A SPEEDILY CONVENED CONVENTION WOULD BE DOMINATED BY TURBAY, CONFIDENTIAL.

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WHO COULD THEN DICTATE THE COMPOSITION OF THE NEW DLN. THE CONVENTION WILL PROBABLY BE POSTPONED.

9. INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL. COLOMBIA MADE A FIRST TENTATIVE MOVE TOWARD RAPPROCHEMENT WITH CUBA WITH AN ANNOUNCEMENT BY FONKUN LIEVANO THAT COLOMBIAN BRANCHES OF

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USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-01 TRSE-00 XMB-02

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MULTINATIONAL CONCERNS WOULD BE PERMITTED TO TRADE WITH CUBA AND THAT HE HAD ASKED THE FORN RELATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO STUDY THE RENEWAL OF DIP RELATIONS. THE LOOSENING OF TRADE PROHIBITIONS WILL HAVE LITTLE IMMEDIATE EFFECT AND THERE SEEMS TO BE NO CONSENSUS IN THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR RENEWAL OF RELATIONS OUTSIDE OF THE FRAMEWORK OF THE OAS. THE STEP SEEMED DESIGNED TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF FORWARD MOVEMENT ON RELATIONS WITH CUBA WHILE AVOIDING VIOLATION OF COLOMBIA'S COMMITMENTS TO THE OAS. THE ACTION WHICH SEEMED TO BENEFIT MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES CAUSED POTENTIAL COLOMBIAN EXPORTERS TO DEMAND THAT THEY, TOO, BE ALLOWED TO TRADE WITH CUBA. (BOGOTA 11378)

10. ECONOMIC RECESSION OR ADJUSTMENT. GOVT SPOKESMEN ARE PLEASED WITH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS, EVEN THOUGH THE PRESENT GOVT CAN ONLY BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR FIVE OF THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS AND COULD EXCUSE ITSELF ON THAT GROUND IF IT CHOSE. THE PRIVATE SECTOR SEES THINGS A LITTLE LESS ENCOURAGINGLY, AS PRIVATE SECTORS TEND TO DO.

11. FINANMIN BOTERO DENIES THAT COLOMBIA IS GOING THROUGH AN CONFIDENTIAL

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ECONOMIC RECESSION. REAL GROWTH IN 74 WILL REACH 6.1 PERCENT HE SAYS--COMPARED TO 7.1 PERCENT IN 73. BY SECTORS, INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION GREW 5.6 PERCENT (9.8PERCENT IN 73), CONSTRUCTION 11.6 PERCENT (12.6 PERCENT), AND AGRICULTURE 5.6 PERCENT (4.7PERCENT). THE COST OF LIVING INCREASE FOR THE YEAR WILL BE ABOUT 25 PERCENT (23.5 PERCENT IN 73) BUT HE PROMISES A RATE BELOW 20 PERCENT FOR 75. THE 74 MONEY SUPPLY INCREASE WILL BE APPROX 20 PERCENT COMPARING FAVORABLY WITH A 29 PERCENT INCREASE IN 73. AND THE FISCAL DEFICIT WAS CONSIDERABLY REDUCED.

12. EXTERNALLY, REGISTERED EXPORTS WILL TOTAL US \$1.3 BILLION AND REGISTERED IMPORTS US \$1.7 BILLION, WITH A DEFICIT OF NEARLY \$400 MILLION. NON-TRADITIONAL EXPORTS, I.E., ALL BUT COFFEE, WILL TOTAL \$780 MILLION, A 34 PERCENT INCREASE IN A YEAR. COLOMBIA'S FOREIGN DEBT WAS REDUCED DURING THE YEAR, ACCORDING TO MIN BOTERO. PESO DEVALUATION RELATIVE TO THE DOLLAR WILL BE 14 PERCENT

13. THE FINANMIN DEFINES THE SITUATION AS ONE OF GOING THROUGH A NECESSARY PERIOD OF ADJUSTMENT. THE GOVT IS IN THE PROCESS OF PUTTING OUT THE FIRE (INHERITED FROM THE PREVIOUS ADMIN) BY EXECUTING A STABILIZATION PLAN. THE GOVT'S DEVELOPMENT PLAN, HE SAYS, IS BASED ON STABILIZATION AND WILL BE PUT INTO FULL EFFECT IN 75.

14. DISAGREEMENT WITH THIS CHARACTERIZATION COMES NOT ONLY FROM THE FORMER PRES, WHO NATURALLY DENIES THAT HE LEFT THE ECONOMY IN FLAMES, BUT ALSO FROM THE NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION (ANDI), THE MOST POWERFUL AND INFLUENTIAL PRIVATE SECTOR VOICE. THE PRES OF ANDI, FABIO ECHEVERRI CORREA, ASSERTS THAT "AT THIS MOMENT THE COUNTRY IS IN A PERIOD OF ECONOMIC RECESSION, ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT A PHENOMENON THAT APPEARS ONLY IN COLOMBIA." HE IS PARTICULARLY CRITICAL OF WHAT HE SAYS IS THE PURELY FISCAL ACTIVITY OF THE FINANMIN AT THE EXPENSE OF DEVELOPMENT. HE IS CONCERNED THAT CONSTRUCTION GROWTH HAS DECLINED, AND THAT EXPORT INCENTIVES WERE REDUCED "WITHOUT SUFFICIENT ANALYSIS." (CONSTRUC-TION AND EXPORTS WERE THE TWIN PILLARS OF DEVELOPMENT UNDER THE FORMER GOVT, AND THE PRESENT ONE HAS DECREASED INCENTIVES TO BOTH SECTORS.) HE ALSO ARGUES THAT NOT ENOUGH HAS BEEN DONE FOR AGRI-CULTURE. ALL THIS, HE SAYS, LEADS TO UNEMPLOYMENT AND GENERAL DISCONTENT

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15. PRES LOPEZ RESPONDED TO ANDI'S CRITICISMS BY SAYING,"
I DON'T SEE HOW YOU CAN SAY THERE IS AN ECONOMIC RECESSION,
IF THERE IS A GROWTH RATE OF 6 PERCENT." THE FACT REMAINS THAT
THERE ARE STRAINS IN THE ECONOMY, AS NOTED BY ANDI, AND THAT THE
GOVT PROBABLY WILL HAVE TO GIVE GREATER ATTENTION TO DEVELOPMENT
THAN IT HAS DURING ITS INITIAL PHASE.

16. UNO REPRIMANDS ITS FORMER PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. IN MIDDEC THE NATIONAL COMMAND OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF OPPOSITION (UNO - A LEFTIST COALITION COMPOSED OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF COLOMBIA-PCC, THE PRO-CHINESE WORKER'S INEPENDENT REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT-MOIR, AND THE COLOMBIAN BROAD MOVEMENT-MAC) PUBLISHED A REPRIMAND OF THE FORMER UNO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE HERNANDO ECHEVERRI MEJIA. THE REPRIMAND ATTACKED ECHEVERRI'S SUPPORT IN THE NATIONAL CONGRESS OF BILLS THAT WERE CONSIDERED BY THE UNO NATIONAL COMMAND TO BE CONTRARY TO THE UNO PLATFORM. ECHEVERRI'S

RECDENT VOTE IN FAVOR OF INCREASING THE SALARIES OF CONGRESSMEN AND SENATORS AFTER OTHER UNO REPS FROM THE MOIR AND THE PCC LINED UP SOLIDLY AGAINST THE MEASURE PROBABLY FORCED THE OPEN SPLIT. THE UNO ACTION FOLLOWED AN EARLIER UNILATERAL ATTEMPT BY THE PCC TO VOICE ITS CNCONCERN OVER ECHEVERRIA'S MAVRERICK VOTING IN HOPES OF BRINGING HIM MORE INTO ACCORD WITH THE UNO 9 POINT PLATFORM. ECHEVERRI'S RESPONSE HAS BEEN TO DECLARE HIS INDEPENDENCE FROM THE DICTUMS OF THE UNO LEADERS AND IN FACT HAS MADE PUBLIC HIS DESIRE TO FORM A NEW SOCIALIST PARTY IN COLOMBIA. THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ECHEVERRI AND THE REMAINING UNO NATIONAL COMMAND APPEAR AT THIS POINT TO BE IRRECONCILABLE AND WILL PROBABLY LEAD TO HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE UNO RANKS.

17. MILITARY BACKS ADMIN. A RECENT SPATE OF COCKTAIL PARTY TALK REGARDING A POSSIBLE FALLING OUT BETWEEN THE LOPEZ ADMIN AND THE COLOMBIAN ARMED FORCES APPEARS GROUNDLESS AND PROBABLY RESULTS IN PART FROM SPECULATION OVER THE FAILURE OF A HOPED FOR ELN GUERILLA SURRENDER COUPLED WITH PRES LOPEZ'S DECISION SOON AFTER NOT TO ATTEND THE AYACUCHO MEETING IN LIMA. THERE HAVE BEEN NO INDICATIONS OF DISSATISFACTION WITH THE GOVT AMONG COLOMBIAN MIL OFFICERS AND ALTHOUGH FACED BY SHORTAGES OF FUNDS FOR OPS, NO MORALE PROBLEMS ARE APPARENT. THE MINOFDEF, GEN VARON VALENCIA RECENTLY HAS MADE PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT FOR THE LOPEZ ADMIN. THE MIL'S MOST POPULAR LEADER, THE COMMANDER CONFIDENTIAL

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OF THE ARMY GEN VALENCIA TOVAR, APPEARS TO BE SOLIDLY BEHIND THE LOPEZ GOVT. GEN VALENCIA TOVAR'S SELECTION FOR PROMITION TO FULL GEN AND HIS MANY APPEARANCES WITH PRES LOPEZ CONTRIBUTE TO THIS FEELING OF SOLIDARITY. FOR THE PRESENT THERE IS LITTLE CAUSE TO BELIEVE THAT COLOMBIAN MIL LEADERS ARE SUFFICIENTLY CONCERNED OVER LOPEZ'S POLICIES TO BE A THREAT TO THE GOVT. GOSSIP OF A MIL COUP IS TO BE DISCOUNTED.

18. THE CIA AND COLOMBIA - PRESS COVERAGE. CONTINUING REVELATIONS OF ALLEGED CIA INTERVENTION IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF LA NATIONS AND A SERIES OF CIA PRESS "FLAPS" HAVE HAD AN UNDENIABLY NEGATIVE EFFECT ON COLOMBIAN PUBLIC OPINION REGARDING THE US. COLOMBIAN OPINION LEADERS SUCH AS FORMER PRES ALBERTO LLERAS AND FORMER FORNMIN VAZQUEZ CARRIZOSA DEPLORED CIA INTERVENTION IN CHILE IN THE STRONGEST TERMS IN SIGNED NEWSPAPER COLUMNS. THE CHILEAN AFFAIR WAS FOLLOWED BY ACCUSATIONS IN THE LEFTIST MAGAZINE ALTERNATIVA TO THE EFFECT THAT THE CIA HAD HELPED TO FINANCE PRES LOPEZ'S LIBEAL REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT (.4)) A FEW YEARS AGO. FINALLY, WILLIAM COLBY'S US NEWS AND WORLD REPORT INTERVIEW AND SUBSEQUENT CHARGES OF DOMESTIC SPYING BY THE CIA HAVE BEEN PLAYED PROMINENTLY IN COLOMBIAN DAILIES IN RECENT DAYS.

THE ALTERNATIVA EXPOSE, BASED ON THE FORTHCOMING BOOK BY EX-CIA AGENT PHILLIP AGEE, MAY HAVE BACKFIRED AGAINST THE LEFT.

THE ALLEGATIONS OF CIA INVOLVEMENT WITH THE MRL MOVEMENT WERE
BRANDED AS "ABSURD" AND "INCREDIBLE" BY KNOWLEDGEABLE OBSERVERS
AND ALTERNATIVA PUBLISHER GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ (THE RENOWNED
NOVELIST) COUNTERED WITH A LAME EXPLANATION BY AGEE ATTEMPTING
TO CLARIFY HIS CHARGES. VAKY

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